

## LINDALE MANUFACTURING

### Lindale, Georgia

The history of the Lindale Manufacturing building dates back to the days of mint juleps, southern hospitality and cotton plantations, one of which was built in the majestic setting of Silver Creek in Lindale, Georgia.

After the devastation of the Civil War took its toll on both the North and the South, each area of the country set out to rebuild. Yankee investors used the remnants from this particular plantation as the foundation for what was to become a huge spinning and weaving mill, housed in three immense brick buildings with generous high sash windows overlooking Silver Creek.

From this factory a colossus was born that ultimately would consume one-seventh of Georgia's annual cotton crop, and that would produce, among many textiles, blue jean denim for the U.S. Navy, Levi Strauss and Sears. The Lindale Mill was to become an exemplar of "New South" industrialism, and its impact on the economy, the people and the communities of this region would span more than 100 years.

This revolutionary success was largely the work of Henry Parrish Meikleham (1872-1937), the great-great grandson of Thomas Jefferson. He is buried at the family cemetery at Monticello near Charlottesville, Virginia.

It was Meikleham who guided and governed the mill's community from 1901 until his death. He respected the workers and what they meant to the success of his mill. He organized workers into baseball teams, marching bands and scout troops. He planted trees and had ice delivered to each street. He required inoculations, provided corporate medical and dental offices, and built churches, schools, an indoor swimming pool, a movie theater, and a well-appointed social complex. It was

Meikleham who gave poor, illiterate, isolated Southern farmers an opportunity to experience 20th-century modernism.

Meikleham's impact on the lives of the workers survived him for years. In fact, 40 years after Meikleham's death, a local oldster was asked, "Who was the best man who ever lived in Lindale?" "Yessuh," he answered, "it was Captain Meikleham – sober." And when asked, "Well then, who was the second best?" he answered, "It was Captain Meikleham – drunk."



The Heart Pine that has been reclaimed from the Lindale factory does not just tell the story of the essential man. It tells the story of thousands of workers. Many worked in the mill for decades; in fact, half were younger than 12 years old when they started work, and many others were below the age of 15. The Lindale factory provided their life's work and the livelihood for generations of families.

Reform, legislation, two wars and the economic breakdown of the Great Depression transformed all of that. Unionism and strikes did not appear in the South until after 1929. By then, the South had supplanted New England in cloth production, leaving many abandoned Yankee mills. The same fate awaited the southern mills by the end

of the 20th century, when the competitive advantage shifted abroad. The wheel had come full circle.

In 2006 Mountain Lumber Company began to rescue the historic Heart Pine beams and timbers that built not only the factory, but the lives of its workers and the economy of the deep South. Some of these timbers are as large as 13"x16"x25'! They are now being transformed into beautiful flooring, reminiscent of that original southern plantation that graced the edge of Silver Creek in Lindale, Georgia.

